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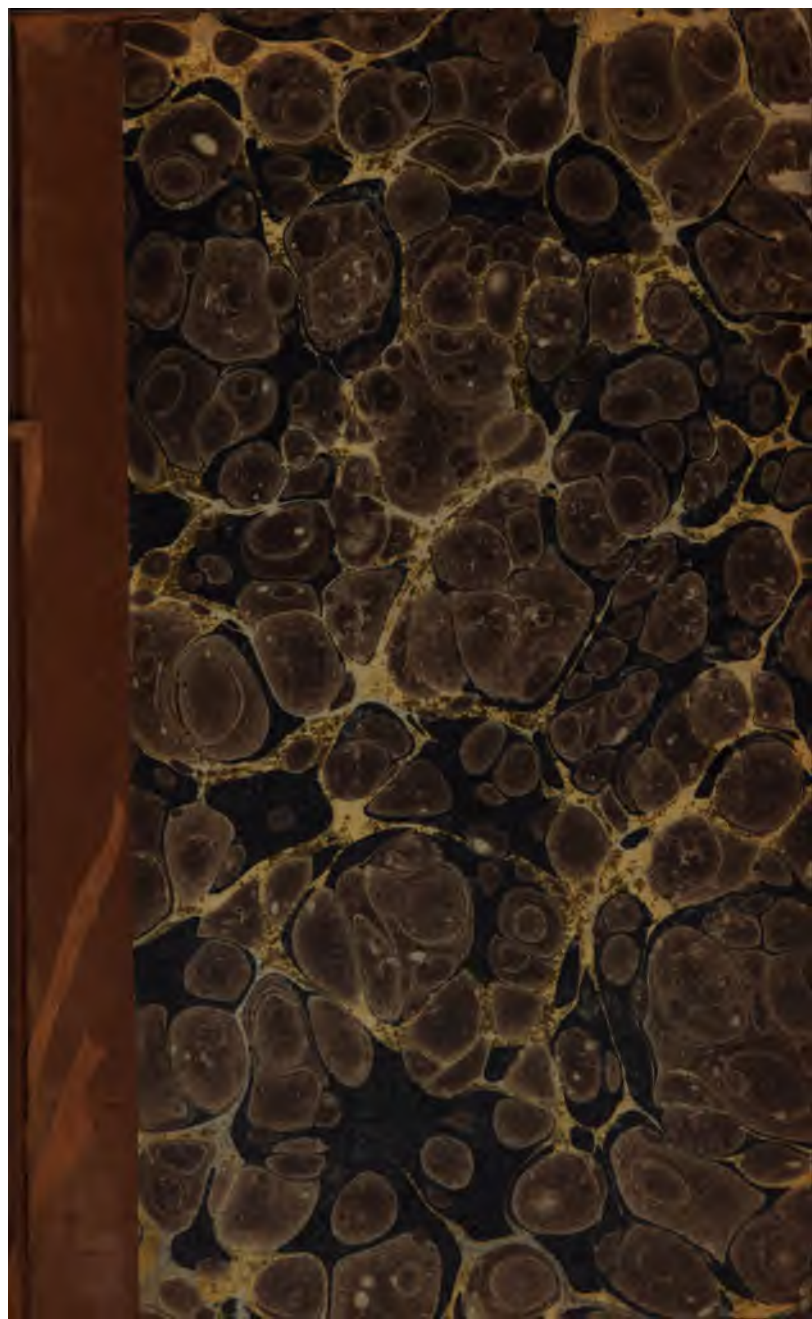
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THE
MARRIAGE
OFFERING ;

OR

A SERIES OF LETTERS ADDRESSED
TO A YOUNG MARRIED LADY ;

EMBODYING

**HINTS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF HOUSEHOLD
DUTIES, AND ON THE MANAGEMENT OF
CHILDREN.**

BY A WIDOW.

Entered at Stationers' Hall.

ROTHERHAM :

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1847.



WHEN two fond hearts spontaneously decide
Their fates henceforth shall be identified,—
But unforeseen calamities arise,
They then each other view with different eyes ;—
And solemn vows, at Hymen's altar plighted,
And mutual marriage promises are alighted :—
When happiness and sweet domestic peace
Do not in every family increase,—
When household words and actions fail to prove
Parental tenderness and filial love :—
Be mine the humble duty to convey
A few plain hints with much solemnity,
Fervently hoping that they may remove
Some obstacles that hinder wedded love ;
Or that they may sweet harmony restore
In families where discord reigned before ;
Or stimulate the mother to exert
Her potent influence on the yielding heart ;—
To foster budding genius, and control
The latent energies of mind and soul,—
And train her sons and daughters in the way
That leads to Heaven and immortality !

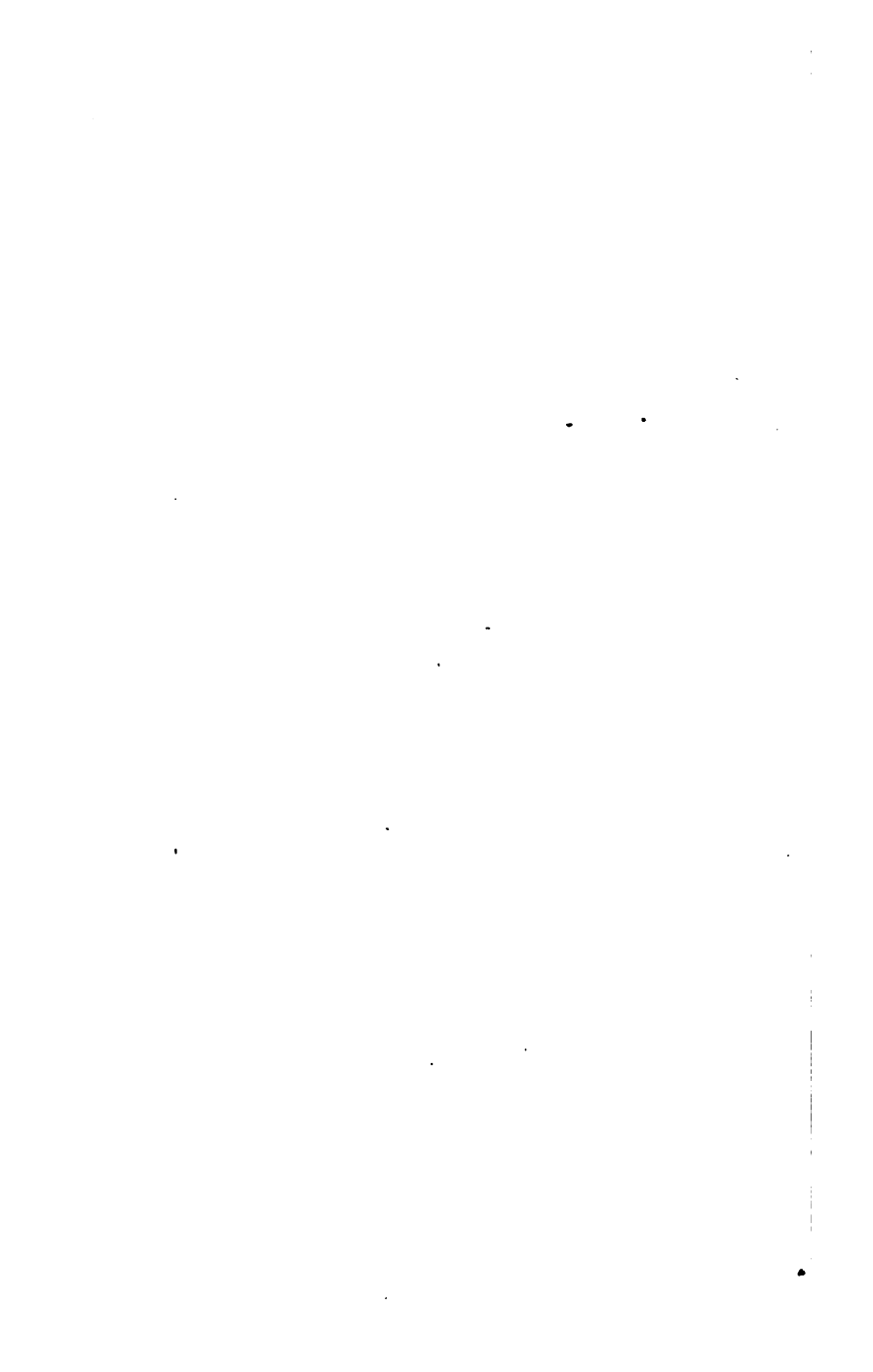
S. R.

Nov. 1st, 1847.

PREFACE.

It is in compliance with the wishes of some valued friends, that the following letters now appear in print. The writer's aim is to furnish those more immediately concerned in domestic duties and juvenile training, with a few plain practical suggestions—the result of extensive experience and observation. She is perfectly aware that, both from the smallness of the publication and the imperfections with which it abounds, it must occupy a very humble position among the learned and talented productions in this department of literature, now extant. But if those wives and mothers who may condescend to favor the following pages with a perusal, be in the slightest degree aided in the performance of their respective obligations and duties by the information here afforded, the author's object will be fully answered.

November 1st, 1847.



LETTER I.

MY DEAR AMELIA,

I was not prepared to expect that your marriage would have taken place quite so soon. Your favor of yesterday has therefore rather taken me by surprise. Accept, however, my warmest congratulations—accompanied with hearty wishes for your present and future happiness. You request me to furnish you with a few hints relative to the duties connected with the new sphere into which you have just entered. Most cheerfully, as far as my abilities and experience may enable me, shall I accede to your wish. You have assigned me rather a serious task, but as you still regard me in some degree as your counsellor, I dare not shrink from its performance.

After the festivities and bustle consequent upon the nuptial ceremony have subsided,—for until then you will have but little time for reflection,—it may be well for you to consider seriously and dispassionately the responsibilities that necessarily attach to your new position. The want of such timely consideration has been the frequent cause of domestic misery. One of your chief aims must be to invest your husband's home with charms—to make it of all other places in the world to him the most attractive. Let nothing be omitted that is likely to contribute to his comfort and enjoyment.

Between you and him there ought to be a oneness of sentiment, feeling, and purpose. Your interests are identified. In every little arrangement, therefore, there should be a cordial co-operation. Leniently regard all his imperfections; and this will produce in him a corresponding disposition to overlook your failings. As it is always after marriage that these little faults are developed, this reciprocity of charitable consideration is essential to the continuance of wedded happiness. When you consider that your union is indissoluble, except by death, what sacrifices can be too great to render it a blissful and prosperous one!

I should recommend you to ascertain the subjects upon which your husband likes more especially to converse. This you may discover by attending to his intercourse with other gentlemen. It might be well for you at times, indirectly to introduce such subjects;—to shew a little of your own predilection for them;—and if you can throw additional light upon some of these favorite topics by your own well-digested observations, you will be amply repaid for any mental effort it may cost you by the satisfaction and pleasure that will be afforded. At the same time that you give due scope to your natural vivacity of disposition, and are ready to take part in the fashionable and ordinary chit-chat of the day, it must not be forgotten that men of cultivated minds soon become tired of frivolous conversation. Many men imagine that when they are thrown into the society of women it is necessary to abstain from all topics except those which are trifling and common place. Their minds should be disabused of this erroneous idea. I should therefore say, shew an interest even in your husband's most literary and intellectual pursuits. If

you can aid him over obstacles now and then, your assistance will be affectionately prized. He will soon find your companionship indispensable. Your mutual happiness will thus be increased,—and the ties of matrimony strengthened.

Permit me to remind you that before marriage you were the object of your husband's assiduous attention ; now it becomes your province to pay devoted attention to him. Study his little peculiarities of habit and disposition,—we all have our eccentricities if we could see them,—and adapt your social conversation and pleasures accordingly. Some men, though amiable and affectionate in the highest degree, are easily irritated. You will soon find out upon exciting occasions whether he be among the number. If under all circumstances, however annoying, he maintains a tone of undisturbed serenity of mind, I must congratulate you upon the treasure you have obtained. He is one of a thousand. But if like many of the sex, and I am sorry to say also of our own, he does not possess evenness of temper, and is too much the subject of momentary impulse, it then becomes your duty to adopt some remedy for the evil. Men are exposed to numerous annoyances and buffetings in their intercourse with the world, with which women are incompetent to sympathize. A fond wife who is but an imperfect physiognomist will soon discover, notwithstanding all his attempts to conceal it, whether her husband's philosophy has failed him in the hour of trial, and left him in a state of agitation. The countenance is generally a faithful indicator on such occasions. You should study his temperament, and endeavour to check the disease in its earliest stage. Perhaps even when premonitory symptoms appear you may skilfully ward it off. At

all events you cannot begin too early. It may be as well sometimes in the first instance to say very little, especially if he evince no desire for conversation. Should he try to hide his feelings and speak with ordinary cheerfulness, your replies and remarks ought to be as charming and agreeable as possible.—New and interesting subjects might be appropriately introduced:—in short do and say any thing that is likely to sooth his temper, and call away his attention from the cause of the annoyance.

Should he utter some harsh observations, then your forbearance will be called into exercise. “A soft answer turneth away wrath,” is the saying of one who well understood human nature. By exhibiting a uniform mild complacency—replying to the most angry expressions with compassionate tenderness, and thus setting an example of true christian meekness—the most violent tempers will ultimately be softened down and subdued. There is no husband, however obstinate in his dispositions, that such well timed forbearance would not, if persevered in, effectually cure.

Among other things, allow me to suggest the propriety of treating all your husband's relatives and friends—even should some of them not appear worthy of your esteem—with the most affectionate attention. You cannot pay a more gratifying compliment to him than by such respectful recognition of those by whom he is bound either by the ties of blood or of friendship; nor can you take a surer step towards securing your own domestic harmony and peace.

In order to preserve your husband's admiration and love, it is not enough that you regard him with unalterable complacency, or that you constantly manifest towards him your deep-

rooted affection. Your attentions to personal appearance should not be less careful than when you were single. Even in the article of dress, while you avoid extravagance, let your habiliments be of the neatest and the best. Few husbands can tolerate slovenliness in this particular. I know a gentleman who a short time since married a fine accomplished woman. He was proud, as well he might be, of having gained the affections of one who was as amiable as she was handsome. A few months after marriage she began to shew symptoms of negligence in her apparel. This her husband to his great mortification soon perceived. Determined to cure her of this culpable carelessness, he adopted the following plan. One day in sitting down to a family dinner he found her in dishabille. He immediately walked away. On meeting a friend of his who he knew would mention the thing to her, he said that his wife had gone from home, and some shabbily dressed woman had taken her place at the dinner table! I need scarcely add that the desired effect was produced.

Cleanliness in every respect should be scrupulously observed. There is much significance in a paragraph I lately saw in an American newspaper.—“Suddenly disappeared—a husband’s affections on seeing his wife sit down to breakfast with dirty hands.” I am aware that the remark is not applicable to women of education and refinement. I am sorry, however, to observe that in families denominated respectable, there is more or less negligence in the observance of this virtue.

After the first few blissful months have passed away you will begin to see the necessity of attending to the pounds, shillings, and pence part of household affairs. This is essentially your

department. I need not say that in house-keeping, extravagance and parsimony should be equally avoided. Your outlayings ought to be in keeping with your worldly circumstances. It is a good method to balance all your accounts once a month. And this will be quite practicable if you pay your tradesmen's bills weekly. If kept in a plain legible manner, request your husband now and then to inspect your accounts, as he will naturally feel an interest in ascertaining the amount of such expenditure.

We are all liable to the vicissitudes of fortune. And when adversity pays its unexpected and unwelcome visit, it is at least satisfactory for women who have the domestic management, to be able to shew by their accounts that it is not attributable to household extravagance. I know several instances of a young couple having begun the world with high hopes and fair prospects. Their endeavours, however, were not crowned with success. And in the absence of such documents as I am recommending, the poor wife has been, in each case, unjustly blamed for her want of economy.

The proper selection of servants is of more importance than many suppose. Your domestic comfort will materially depend upon the sort of agents you appoint to do the household duties. Their moral characters ought at all events to be unexceptionable. They should also be strong and healthy. When they come into your service, inform them of the regulations by which they must be guided. Habituate them from the very first to obey you cheerfully and promptly. Should you find a difficulty in making some of them submit to the discipline of your establishment, you must treat them with great forbearance. Perhaps they may

have acquired bad habits at their last place, where strictness and punctuality have been less observed. However troublesome and refractory they may be, do not allow yourself to be agitated. Rather dismiss them from your service at once. But if your commands be reasonable, and are given in a mild firm tone of voice—if your servants discover that you are disposed to be kind and indulgent to them, and that you place confidence in their uprightness and integrity—you will not find it difficult to enforce instant obedience and constant attention. Some ladies are in the habit of scolding servants—and also of reprimanding them for faults in the presence of others. The absurdity of such a practice is too apparent to require any observations. They not only thereby lose their own dignity in the eyes of their domestics, but they wound some of the finest sensibilities of the heart, and they engender in the minds of their servants a hatred which no after kindness can entirely remove. Sometimes much may be done in procuring obedience and watchfulness by a little tact.—You will no doubt have heard of the celebrated Dean Swift's stratagem to cure a house-maid of a habit of leaving the parlour door open on going in and out of the room. She was going to the marriage of a friend one day, and having as usual left the room door open, she was allowed by the Dean to proceed on her way nearly a mile, when he sent an express after her that her master wished to speak with her; she, returning in great haste, enquired the cause. "O! nothing particular," replied the Dean.—"Be good enough to shut the door." I much question whether she ever left the door open afterwards.

There are many little follies in servants that must be passed over in compassionate

silence. Even for what might be designated impertinence, they should be reprov'd very gently. They have not had the advantages of a liberal education, nor of mixing with refined society. In servants we may often find real sterling good qualities in a rough unpolished garb; and frequently their conduct, when apparently meddlesome and officious, is found upon examination to be honest and praiseworthy. Many years ago, a young woman was engaged by a Clergyman with whom I was acquainted, as servant in his family. On one occasion, when about to punish his eldest boy, she boldly exclaimed that she would never see a child beat for an offence of which he was not guilty, and forcibly removed the child from the place. The father naturally felt indignant that a servant should have the audacity to interfere with parental authority, and threatened her with immediate dismissal. She shewed her readiness to submit to any consequences, and manifested an utter indifference to the loss of her situation, but said that while she remained she would not allow an innocent child to be punished. As soon as her master had recovered from the agitation, the affair was carefully investigated, and the boy's innocence satisfactorily proved. The girl, notwithstanding her forwardness, had acted disinterestedly and honorably. She became such a favorite with both her master and mistress, that she has lived nearly twenty years in the family, and is invested with a large share of authority in the household.

Shew an interest in your servant's welfare, and you will win their respect. Make them happy, and you transform them into humble friends. Confer upon them every legitimate privilege and indulgence, and you inspire them with feelings of

fidelity and gratitude. There is something delightful in the idea of being surrounded with individuals whom we have substantially befriended, and in whom we may repose implicit confidence in times of emergency.

It is incumbent on you to see that your servants regularly attend their respective places of worship, and often to remind them of their religious obligations during the week. Should any of them be unable to read the scriptures, endeavour to have them taught. They may not always value your admonition and advice in reference to their higher destinies. Do not, however, be discouraged. Bread cast upon the waters may be found after many days. The seed you deposit may eventually take root. They may reflect on your counsels and your example when they are removed from your service. At all events you will have the consolatory consciousness that their best interests were not lost sight of while they were under your protection.

I dare not conclude this letter without expressing my fervent hope that the imperative and sacred duty of bowing at the family altar will be regularly observed. Let no common circumstances induce its omission. In the absence of your husband conduct this important service yourself. Family worship, if duly and solemnly performed, seldom fails to improve the characters of those who come within the sphere of its hallowing influence. It promotes regularity and order in the household. It is a reasonable service offered to Him upon whom we are daily depending for every temporal and spiritual comfort we need. And those families who neglect this great duty have no scriptural promise of even worldly prosperity.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

MY DEAR AMELIA,

It is just twelve months since I received the tidings of your marriage. Your welcome favor of yesterday, acquaints me that you are a mother. That your infant boy may be a blessing and a credit to you, is my sincere prayer. The duties that devolve upon you in your new capacity are as important as they are interesting. This child is entrusted by Heaven to your maternal guardianship—to be trained up in the way he should go—to be prepared for his various relationships and destinations in life—whether as a son—a subject—a man—a member of society—or a candidate for a better world. If a few simple hints, which in obedience to your request I now write, prove of any service to you, I shall rejoice.

With respect to the physical management of your child, I prefer leaving you in the hands of your talented medical adviser. His suggestions on that score will I know be duly valued. I shall not intrude upon that gentleman's province farther than by stating that food, air, warmth, clothing, and exercise, are points of the utmost moment—and whether your boy grows up healthy, lively, and robust, will depend materially upon your attention to them.

I should recommend you to be very particular in your selection of a nurse. Some think any young person is fit for such an office. But this is a greivous mistake. There are several indispensable qualifications which a nurse ought to possess.

She should be healthy, otherwise the poor child may suffer very seriously.

She ought to be lively, with a good flow of animal spirits, and much fluency of speech. Mandeville says—"the more an infant in health is talked to and jumbled about, the better it is for it, at least for the first two years; and for its attendance in this early education, to the wisest matron in the world, I would prefer an active young wench, whose tongue never stands still—that should run about and never cease diverting and playing with it—and when people can afford it, two or three of them, to relieve one another when they are tired."

She ought to be refined in her behaviour, and be able to speak with propriety. A friend of mine had a nurse recommended to her of strictly honest principles and character. She engaged her, but in consequence of the woman's provincial dialect and vulgar manners, her mistress was advised to part with her. She did so—long before the child was able to speak—but it was too late. The child had acquired her broad accent, and some of her coarsest ways. And it required months to eradicate the habits thus formed. An infant's powers of imitation are called into activity much earlier than most people suppose.

For the same reason she should be incapable of a falsehood. A very young child understands much that we say before it has acquired articulate power to utter its own thoughts.

The very best nurses have little faults, which it is the mother's duty to find out and correct. For instance—in addressing an infant, they often employ a dialect—a sort of broken bad english—at all events a language quite different to that which the child is expected to learn.

An American lady advertises to open a class in New York for young mothers and nurses, in order to teach them to talk to the children agreeably and correctly at the same time. Such classes, I think, are very much required in England.

Some nurses, when they experience a difficulty in pacifying the child, will not hesitate to threaten it with some object of terror. This practice cannot be too severely reprobated. The impression made upon my own mind by an injudicious nurse, will remain as long as I live. Children should be accustomed to go into a dark room. They will soon find, without any information on the subject, that the absence of light is the only alteration. And they will be thus in after life saved those disagreeable frightful associations which to so many, especially in the rural districts, darkness and night are sure to bring along with them.

It is also very common for nurses to inflict pretended chastisement on the floor—the table—the chair—or any other inanimate object by which the child may have been accidentally hurt. “Ha, table, take that—why did you hurt little Harry?” Thus deceiving the child by investing with the sense of feeling, objects whose qualities he has not yet ascertained—and also initiating him into the first principles of fretfulness, anger, and revenge! I feel quite confident, however, that should you ever witness such proceedings in your nursery, they will be visited with well-timed reprehension.

Both yourself and your nurse will find some difficulty in understanding the child's instinctive methods of expressing want, fear, pain, or desire. To these signs you must pay great attention, until you be able to attach to them their proper signification. There is one great advantage in being able to interpret your child's gestures with readiness: and that is, you will know better how to pacify him when he cries—you will sooner discover whether this violent effort of his vocal powers is indicative of pain—or only of some fretful peevish disposition—or perhaps of disappointment in not having been indulged in some unintelligible request—and will thus be able to adapt your soothing, pacifying measures, according to the circumstances of the case.

The causes that produce crying are so various, and the natural temperaments of children are so different, that it would be impossible to lay down any rule for the prevention of an evil which all poor mothers and nurses have to deplore. Much depends, however, on their individual care, whether children have recourse so frequently to this tormenting practice of crying or not.

Mothers are too much in the habit of caressing children, and expressing pity for them, when they have no good reason for supposing that crying proceeds from any other source than their bad tempers. Children who are the recipients of such mistaken indulgence, will, sometimes, as they grow up, take advantage of it. They will have tears at command when they want sympathy, or wish to carry some point. I knew a young lady, who, up to the age of sixteen, could by this means obtain almost anything she desired. If her mother only expressed disapproval, a flood of tears and violent headach were almost sure to follow. All

her wishes were therefore granted. It was ultimately thought expedient to send her for twelve months to a finishing boarding school. The first advice was given privately by the teacher. It was followed, as usual, by weeping and subsequent indisposition. The teacher, with judicious firmness, told the young lady that she was not moved by her tears. If she conducted herself well it would be a source of pleasure—but if otherwise, crying would never induce her to withhold due admonition—and as she had shed tears on receiving kind advice privately, whatever, either in praise or blame, had to be said to her in future, must be before the whole school. This plan succeeded, for finding tears unavailing, she gave up weeping altogether. When habits of this sort have been once acquired, the only way of removing them is by striking at the root at once.

I believe it is possible to train many children even to endure pain silently. I am not recommending you to make the attempt; this I leave to your own discretion. But some mothers have succeeded in convincing their little ones, that while crying renders other people very uncomfortable, it in no way mitigates their own sufferings. And some of these children have borne the acutest agonies without an audible murmur escaping their lips.

I am far from supposing that all children are susceptible of such a degree of training. I am, however, quite sure that, even if we cannot make them stoics or philosophers, a little care and skill on the part of mothers will save a great deal of unnecessary crying, and render our nurseries far more quiet and agreeable than they generally have been. I believe every body would love children, were it not for the evil of which we are complaining. It almost makes them little nuisances to society—

it robs them of half their charms and their loveliness—it makes little innocents the terror of all who are fond of peace and quietude—and often prevents their introduction into that company which is so fitting for them—in which they might learn from the wisdom of age—and cheer by the sallies of youth.

I need not, therefore, urge upon you the propriety of using every means in your power to repress a propensity in your child which is the cause of so much unhappiness.

I have heard some mothers say, "Never mind the child, a cry will do him good." That exertion of the lungs and of the vocal organs, is promotive of health, I readily grant. But there are many ways of employing these physical powers without distressing all who come within their hearing. Let the child when he is able to walk, go into the garden, or into the fields, and laugh, and shout, and bellow—in short, make any noises he pleases, rather than those which are indicative of pain, or of the worst feelings of the heart.

I must not omit noticing the necessity of training your child to habits of prompt and willing obedience. You cannot at all times make the propriety of your commands intelligible to him. That is not necessary. A very little tact, accompanied with affectionate firmness, are only required to inculcate habitual submission to your authority. And a sensible child will soon perceive and appreciate the beauty of that established order and good family government which this ready implicit obedience is sure to produce.

I knew a little boy, who has since distinguished himself by good conduct and literary assiduity at a public school. He was an only child,

and completely spoiled. He was permitted by his fond parents to do at home just as he pleased. When about seven years of age, he was sent to a well conducted preparatory school. Before he had been there many days, he shewed symptoms of insubordination. His teacher, however, checked every rising attempt to rebel. After much watchfulness and perseverance, she found him at length yielding to her authority, and acquiescing in her commands. She then discovered him to be a most tractable engaging boy, and as obedient and attentive as she could desire. Some time after this improvement had taken place in the boy's disposition, his father visited him, and among other matters observed, how very glad the family would be to see him home at the approaching holidays. "Well," said the little fellow, "I should very much like to go home if you and my mother would make me obey you, but I fear you will not, so I think I had better stay at the school." The poor boy was not wanting in love for his parents, but young as he was, he saw the advantage of law and order, without which, children themselves cannot be happy—nor either families or schools effectually managed.

If your requirements be always reasonable and proper, unaccompanied with harsh tones, but communicated in a mild, bland, decisive manner, you may calculate on immediate compliance. And every act of obedience will raise you higher and higher in your child's esteem. There is no surer way of making your child love you, than by training him to habits of obedience.

You ask my opinion of corporeal chastisement. I think the rod ought to be used very sparingly. Some consider that it may be dispensed with altogether; but a wiser than any of us was of

a different opinion. Very much depends on the child's natural disposition. If he be stubborn and head-strong, or likely to get the upper hand of you—if he will not be influenced by fair, gentle measures—then I think you have no alternative. On these occasions, you and his father should always, at least, *seem* to coincide in the matter; otherwise, the penetrating child will perceive when there is a difference of sentiment, and will take advantage of the circumstance. The effect of correction will be thus spoiled, and its aim frustrated.

You should also ascertain whether he be in ordinary health—or susceptible of atmospheric changes, or other influences likely to produce peevishness or obstinacy. Sometimes the cause of a child's waywardness or ill-humour may be easily removed.

If he have committed some misdeemeanour, satisfy yourself that it has been done intentionally—or, as the lawyers say, with a guilty knowledge, and has not been the result of ignorance or inadvertency. Without this caution, little innocents may be punished for faults which they could not avoid. In making their scientific experiments upon the texture and qualities of surrounding objects, children may sometimes do a great amount of mischief. For instance, a hundred pound note will be as readily torn and destroyed as a piece of brown paper—and the crime in each case, (in fact there is no crime at all, unless there be an act of disobedience) is equally great—for according to their untutored ideas, the one is just as valuable as the other. And so with regard to accidents, if a child has thrown down and broken a costly drawing room ornament, or the commonest earthen article in the kitchen, his chastisement ought never to be according

to the value of the thing injured. He does not even deserve reprehension, if he has not been previously taught to avoid the cause which produced the disaster. Our duty is, simply to furnish him with the information necessary to prevent a repetition of the occurrence.

When punishment is unavoidable, let it not be administered hurriedly. Converse affectionately and seriously with your child—explain the necessity of moral obligation, expressing at the same time your sorrow in being compelled to inflict pain upon one whom you tenderly love. Should he evince contrition, and own the justice of your determination to chastise him, a very slight correction, perhaps the withholding from him some little enjoyment, will be sufficient.

I hope, however, that you will be able to maintain wholesome discipline in your family, without calling in the aid of harsh, severe measures. Love should be the director of all the mother's proceedings with the little object of her affection. She is to him the greatest—nay, the only being in the world. She is to him his all in all. If dangers threaten, or strangers approach, how tenaciously he clings to her. She is his refuge. In her arms he feels perfect security. Around her maternal person his young heart strings are entwined. Try every mild, rational method of discipline with your child first—and only in the event of their failure, have recourse, as a last resort, to correction. Some mothers never try to maintain their children's affectionate confidence. They are the creatures of impulse. They say, "I could not beat my child, unless I was angry." And under the influence of momentary passion, they often punish their children with undeserved severity.—What are the consequences?

In the first place, the mother's remorse.—She is sure to shed tears of regret, when she has time for after reflection. As regards the child, fear sometimes takes the place of love—artifice and dissimulation supply the room of infant openness and honesty. The child's obedience being induced by the dread of punishment, whenever it can be done with impunity, the mother's wishes will be disregarded;—and worse than all, her exasperating conduct is sure to develop every feeling of bitterness, malice, and revenge of which the infant mind is capable.

Some mothers of fretful and impatient dispositions, are in the habit of finding fault with every thing the child does, whether it be right or wrong. When the mother's smile of approval is withheld, the child is deprived of one of the sweetest and strongest springs of action. All his young aspirations are repressed in the bud. Instead of joyous sprightliness, we may sometimes see in his countenance, the picture of disappointed hopes. Other parents are too profuse in their children's praises—and seldom rebuke for any behaviour, however improper. By thus regarding all the child does with complacency, the mother's commendation is shorn of most of its power. Its very commonness renders it of comparatively little value. I need scarcely add how necessary it is to guard against these two extremes. I feel, that in your case, I might have saved myself the task of penning these observations. I know how solicitous you feel to instil upright, open, honorable principles in the mind of your dear boy—to call into exercise the noblest and the most amiable parts of his nature—and to supply him with the proper incentives to ready obedience and filial love.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

MY DEAR AMELIA,

How rapidly time glides along! It seems only yesterday when I was congratulating you on your marriage—indeed, but a very short time since, you were a girl at school yourself. Now you are the mother of two children!

I am very glad to learn that you succeeded in procuring the services of Miss B——, as nursery governess. Your son being now three and a half, and your daughter two years old, you require assistance in training them. You will find Miss B. in every way suitable. She has had considerable experience in the management of children older than yours. Her moral and religious character is unexceptionable. Not only are her literary attainments of a very high order, but she possesses judgment, penetration, and sagacity; without which, the finest accomplishments are but of little worth. I have had opportunities of witnessing the ready, agreeable way in which she imparts instruction to others. There is so much real kindness and genuine good feeling about her, that she is sure to win the affections of your children. Altogether, I am confident, you will find in her an efficient auxiliary—one that will equal your most sanguine wishes.

In your eagerness to educate your son, I fear you will exceed the boundaries of prudence. I rather regret to hear that you have already commenced teaching him to spell and read. I think the circumstance you mention of one of your labourer's children of the same age having learned to read at the charity infant school, has unduly influenced you in the matter.

I am, however, glad you subscribe so liberally to infant schools. To poor fathers and mothers who, even if they were competent to the task, are so occupied with out-door work or household duties, that they have no time to attend to the moral or mental requirements of their children, these institutions are undoubted blessings. Without them, most of the infant children of the poor might be left, as they formerly were, to the education they would receive on the highways or the public streets. The good they have effected in all places where they have been judiciously managed, is incalculable. Thousands of men and women who are now ornaments to the sphere in which they live, can trace their first best impressions to the infant school. And if I cannot recommend them to you as models for the management of your own family, it is because the conductors are often compelled by existing circumstances, to depart from that course which nature itself suggests in the treatment of the infant mind. To be explicit.—In these institutions, relying on voluntary contributions for support, it is often found necessary to have a little display of early talent and acquirements, in order to keep alive the interest of many of the subscribers. And the parents, ignorant themselves, and incompetent to appreciate any thing in the way of spontaneous mental training—the only kind suitable for infants

—are seldom pleased with their children's progress, when it is not made distinctly visible to them.

I may also state, that the time these poor children have to remain at school—perhaps till nine or ten years of age—is so short, that the arts of reading, writing, and computation, the three great sciences of the working classes, are expected to be taught at the very outset, otherwise they may not be acquired at all.

Hence you will perceive, that there is in the case of the working classes a pardonable excuse for that early intellectual development of which I complain. And then, children in the humbler walks of life have this advantage.—After they leave school, they are, for the most part, engaged in pursuits merely mechanical. Their mental energies are very little occupied. And there is that elasticity about the youthful intellect, that by this rest or cessation, it soon recovers from the injury it may have sustained;—whereas, when your children once commence book-learning, it cannot be brought so soon to a close. They may have to continue their intellectual pursuits almost uninterruptedly for a long series of years. Thus, my dear Amelia, you have a few of my reasons for not turning your children's attention, except by way of accident or amusement, to books, for at least the first four or five years of their lives. Take my word for it, their future progress will be all the surer and more rapid, when they begin to learn, for the few years' postponement of book-learning I am suggesting.

Both yourself and teacher, however, will find abundance of employment. Few can imagine how much a child has to learn, in a world so new to him, and abounding with objects of such varied kinds. How attentively does he examine

every thing that comes under his notice!—investigating with the patience of a philosopher, its nature, properties, and use. It is your province, indirectly to aid him in those examinations and inquiries, rather than direct him to an artificial study for which he can have no desire. “From trees, and plants, and flowers, he will derive his most appropriate lessons.” If you attend to his health—his comfort—his temper—and moral habits—you need feel no anxiety about his book studies, for the next few years. Have you ever heard of any great men who were distinguished in childhood? There may be a few exceptions, but it is not the rule. Besides, teaching to spell and read, is not education.—Nay, it is rather an interruption of that sound, healthy education, that nature will give your child, if you will only condescend to be her interpreter and assistant.

But although I am opposed to premature book-learning, I am a strong advocate for early moral training. You cannot begin too soon. In infancy, the mind is most impressible. It is like the softened wax. Impressions made upon the young yielding heart are indelible. Though the old man, tottering on the brink of the grave, may have but a dim imperfect remembrance of the events of manhood, the reminiscences of early years often rush upon his mind with invigorating freshness. A simple air or tune, with which our ears may have been accustomed in infancy, will sometimes recall scenes of early days, and awaken up all the associations of childhood. Habits formed during this susceptible period, are generally hard to be uprooted in any after period of life. And ideas, whether right or wrong, if entertained in childhood, are not easily dislodged. How assiduously careful, therefore,

should we be to implant good principles at this momentous season of the child's existence !

I have already intimated to you that, if your little son be allowed to follow the eagerness of his own inclination, he will soon make himself acquainted with some important elementary branches of knowledge. When you take him into the country—to a fine garden—to a large rock—a pretty cascade—or a seaport town—impressions are involuntarily made upon his mind which are not short-lived—and which are suggestive of a vast number of interrogations. He will almost overwhelm you with his multitudinous inquiries. Though it may rather severely tax your patience, yet if the questions be fair and rational, it will be well to reply to them as explicitly as you can. You will find this to be a sweet exercise of parental ingenuity. If he request an explanation of subjects that can hardly be made intelligible to him, candidly tell him that he must wait until he be older, and his mind more matured, before you can answer his question satisfactorily.—That then he will be able to understand a great many things that are now utterly beyond his comprehension. Although it would be unwise to encumber his mind with the technical designations of things about which he wishes to be informed, yet your explanations should be given in that simple, rich, colloquial style, by which he will not merely be put in possession of valuable ideas, but will also be furnished with choice, familiar terms of expressing them.

How potent is the influence of example with children ! They are the creatures of imitation from the moment they begin to observe the conduct of those around them. I have sometimes seen an infant boy, long before he was able to enunciate a

syllable, endeavour to imitate his father's mode of walking in the garden. Whether his arms were "a kimbo," or placed behind him, the child would trudge along with *his* arms in the same position. The movements, whether graceful or otherwise, are sure to be copied. The child receives genteel, quite as readily as vulgar impressions. And habits thus early formed are not easily altered.

So in conversation, if, as I intimated in a former letter, your nurse has a provincial accent, or if any of those with whom your child comes in contact are in the habit of using low expressions, you need not be surprised if they be imitated in his earliest articulations. A short time since, an interesting little girl, not quite three years old, went into her father's bedroom, shouting, "Hollo! old fellow, are you going to lie there all day?" The gentleman was so much alarmed, that he sent his little daughter almost immediately from home. It appeared the child had overheard one of her father's men-servants make the remark to another who had been indulging himself in too long a rest after dinner. Instances of this kind are very common, and prove the necessity of keeping children as much as possible from society that might exert a corrupting influence on their manners or their speech.

There is a great advantage in habituating children to speak correctly from infancy. If their parents and those around them employ correct and elegant phraseology in the expression of their ideas, the children's ears become so refined, that they can detect the slightest grammatical error, and this too without knowing any of the rules of syntax. I have often been delighted in hearing little boys and girls describe their visits to certain places, and conduct their conversations on various subjects, in

that fine, flowing style of language so peculiar to youth—and without one single inaccuracy of expression that I could discover. When children are thus trained to clothe their thoughts in proper diction, the necessity for learning grammar will be in a great measure superseded. At all events, the practice will be acquired before the theory.

While alluding to example, I think it my duty to notice lying or equivocation, as one of the worst and most hateful propensities of which human beings can be guilty. How readily do children fall into this abominable practice, if the principles of truth are not deeply instilled into their minds—or if falsehood or prevarication be ever observable in the conversation of their nurses—their instructors—or their parents. I once heard a little boy say to his teacher,—“Miss — you always say that I must speak the truth.—Why, mother tells falsehoods to father every day. I have heard her many, many times!” Children are far more discerning in those matters than parents generally imagine. The case I mention may be a rare one. But, the force of example is as powerful in reference to truth as to all the other moral qualities which you are solicitous for your offspring to possess.

I must not omit noticing the importance of grounding your children well in the principles of true politeness. Some parents allow their children to grow up carelessly in these matters, and afterwards study a code of rules for polite behaviour. I need not caution you against such an absurd mode of proceeding. Permit your children to be as much as possible in your society. Even when you have company, do not exclude them too much from your presence. They, themselves must learn to be com-

panionable. Give them as many opportunities as possible of witnessing the graceful behaviour of your guests—the elegant manner in which all the little offices of courtesy and kindness are performed—and the solicitude of each to promote the social enjoyment of the whole. If you lay a right foundation, inspiring them with scriptural humility, each esteeming other better than themselves—with self-denying readiness to abandon their own gratifications, when they can thereby render others happier—they will almost involuntarily adopt all the urbanities and civilities of life which distinguish the well-bred portion of the community—and with your own, their father's, and your accomplished teacher's example constantly before them, they will grow up, without any auxiliaries in the form of books, as polite, as graceful, and as refined in their manners as you can possibly desire.

There is much difference of opinion with respect to the propriety of entrusting children with the charge of money. I think the earlier they are initiated into the laws of property, the better. As soon as a child gets a top, a hobby-horse, or other toy, he will manifest instinctive ideas of possession. He is conscious of what belongs to himself; and even when his conceptive faculties are in a very immature state, will select from among other articles, those which he justly claims as his own. These inherent notions of property, may be early rendered available in the inculcation of many useful precepts.—Such as,—never to take—injure—meddle with—or even wish for, anything that does not belong to himself—to be kind and obliging—always ready to do unto others as he should wish others to do unto him. These principles may be brought into constant exercise, by numerous incidents that will

occur, both at home and abroad.

By furnishing him with a small sum of money, you can better explain to him its nature and use. That "it is the earnings of industry—the representative of property"—and the instrument of procuring the necessities and the superfluities of life. Hence the necessity of economy and wisdom in exchanging it for other commodities. Perhaps in walking through the streets, he observes some gaudy trifle he should like to purchase. Here you may shew him the foolishness of expending his money on a thing so useless—and the propriety of husbanding his cash until he is favored with an opportunity of laying it out well. Even with children, these little acts of self-denial are not without their wholesome influence.

In training his moral faculties, you may, for instance, ask him to lend you a small sum for a short time—which you must return punctually, with expressions of obligation. He will here learn two lessons—the beauty of punctuality and the pleasure of conferring favors upon others. You must, however, be very particular in keeping your promise, otherwise the consequence may be serious. I remember a fine child, between five and six years old, of wealthy parents, who, upon one occasion, while at home during the holidays, lent his mother half a crown, which she promised to refund to him the following day. She merely wished to give her boy the pleasure of doing her a kindness. She, however, forgot all about the circumstance. The boy returned to school. The mother's neglect, however, weighed heavily on his mind.—For, several months afterwards, when his teacher had returned from a visit to the metropolis, he asked her very seriously if she had seen his mother. On her

replying in the affirmative, he added, "Did mamma happen to say whether she was rich?—because she was very poor when I was in London. She borrowed half a crown of me—and did not pay me. I know she would have paid me if she had been able. And as she has not sent it yet, I fear she is still very poor."

You will, of course, foster every generous and benevolent feeling that your child may exhibit. If, for instance, he have purchased some sweetmeats, or other good things so congenial to the infant palate, and is liberally sharing them with his little sister, or playmates, should you notice the circumstance at all, let it be with the kindest look of approval.

Some children who have been brought up in affluence, can hardly be convinced that there are thousands of poor little creatures around them in a state of destitution. A dear little boy whom I well knew, after his mother remarked, "How thankful you ought to be, Frank, that all your wants are supplied, while there are so many poor children almost without food or clothes," immediately responded, "Indeed, mother, I cannot be as thankful as I ought to be, because I don't know the difference between want and plenty. I think if you would send me a week to some poor person's house, and let me live as they do, I should know better what want is."

I am not an advocate for exciting children's sympathies too early. But when the nature of poverty and wealth are properly understood, you need not hesitate to take your child to see some families in indigent circumstances—especially if they be cleanly, and not in the lowest grade of want.—By conversing with them kindly and

feelingly in his presence, about their trials and necessities, he will feel a desire to give something towards their relief. A boy's first act of charity is often a very important incident—sometimes it has been the commencement of a life of generous deeds. At all events, by indulging your son in his amiable wish, you add materially to his happiness. The consciousness of having comforted a distressed family—the expressions of gratitude which his little donation may have called forth—will communicate to his young susceptible heart, a joy which cannot soon be blotted from his recollection.

As he gets older, his pecuniary resources may be judiciously increased. There are many religious and benevolent associations which have strong claims on christian sympathy. When the need and utility of such societies can be intelligibly explained to him, but not before, you may legitimately allow him the privilege of subscribing to them.

Thus, by affectionately endeavouring to mould his young feelings to uprightness and charity, you will, I trust, see your son grow up, not merely honorable and straight-forward in all his dealings—but, actuated by principles of enlarged humanity, a benefactor to his species, and an ornament to the sphere in which he may be destined to move.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR AMELIA,

In my former communications I omitted to state the propriety of allowing your children to rise early in the morning. They will naturally like to do so. And by gratifying them in their wish, you begin the formation of a habit that may tell beneficially on all their future prospects in life. Besides, you thereby materially promote their health. "The breath of morn," is sweet and invigorating to all. In the summer, I should recommend you to spend half an hour, or a longer time with them in the garden, before breakfast. Make them walk backwards and forwards—extend their arms, which will expand their chest, and increase their muscular strength—or perform any other physical exercises you may deem suitable. After breakfast, let them play for a given time at skiprope, ball, battledore, shuttlecock, or any other game they please, perfectly free from all restraint. Give them plenty of amusement. This will act as a safety valve to their exuberant spirits. It will produce a gentle fatigue, and cause them to remain contentedly still, during their morning lessons—and will have a most advantageous effect upon their constitutions. I cannot too strongly impress upon you, the necessity of endeavouring in every possible way to render your

children light-hearted and happy. If their progress in the school-room does not exactly equal your expectations, never feel disappointed. Be grateful and pleased when they are lively and healthy—when your little ones are bounding about you, rejoicing in their young existence—and compelling you to give attention to their loud outbursts of innocent mirth. But, lest you may be getting apprehensive of the infliction of an essay on childish levity, I beg permission to accompany you and the governess to the school-room, and to try if I can aid you in your interesting and arduous duties there.

Although I have objected to early book-learning, yet if your children, without passing through any severe ordeal, or sustaining any undue mental fatigue, can be instructed to read and write, their progress in learning will be very much expedited, and your teachings greatly facilitated by the acquisition. Oral teaching is always best for infants. But when they are entering on the stage of childhood, they may be safely put in possession of these instruments of acquiring knowledge from books. There are so many short methods of the “reading made easy” character, that I scarcely think it necessary, even should you propose to teach them systematically, to trouble you with an explanation of any set plans.

Children are generally fond of tales and stories, whether real or imaginary. They will listen most attentively for an hour to the relation of a fictitious narrative. Instead of gratifying to the full, this disposition for hearing of marvellous adventures, the judicious teacher will endeavour to moderate it, and to render it a medium for conveying wholesome instruction. Some teachers relate

extemporaneous tales, in which one of the children themselves is now and then unmistakeably alluded to, and some well known facts and circumstances ingeniously pictured out. The children's countenances will often give evident indications of recognition, as the instructor proceeds in her fascinating narrative; and, though spell-bound by her simple eloquence, they can seldom repress their inclination to cry aloud that they know who and what the story is all about. How much real, substantial instruction may be imparted, while the children's attention is thus rivetted!

There are books, almost innumerable, containing interesting and instructive stories, couched in language adapted to the childish capacity. A selection from any of these, may be very beneficially read aloud to them, with such omissions as you may deem expedient. May I here remind you how careful we should be with regard to correctness of pronunciation, tone, and emphasis, while reading before those little creatures who look up to us as models, and whose readiness of imitation is proverbial!

Your teacher possesses one very useful accomplishment.—I mean the art of sketching the outlines of objects and places with readiness and rapidity—which may be turned to great practical account. All the familiar and striking forms of nature and art, can be brought under the children's inspection in this way, very effectively. If you only give them the mere outlines of some object or animal, their lively fancies are sure to supply what may be omitted by the pencil. Indeed, the less pains you take, they will like the representation the better. Their progress in the study of natural history, will be rendered very pleasing and rapid by such an

auxiliary. And you will find that "rough outlines, by giving fuller exercise to the imagination, will always be more acceptable than the most finished pictures."

By such means you may also excite their compassion for the miseries of others, and inspire them with gratitude for their own exemption from calamities. You have only to sketch out roughly, some of the incidents of common life—say a poor family, destitute of food—a widow, mourning for the loss of her husband—two or three little orphans, looking sorrowfully, in their bereavement—a beggar, soliciting the cold hand of charity—a poor soldier, who has lost his arms in battle—an accident on the railway—a shipwreck at sea—or any other subject you may consider most appropriate. They will listen with intense interest to all your statements—and numerous will be their inquiries about the object to which your sketch has so effectually drawn their attention.

You will find the children themselves, very anxious to handle the pencil, either on slate or paper. Do not prevent them. If in their first effort they should make a line, give it a name—as curve—horizontal—perpendicular, or oblique—according to its inclination. Even before they be able to form a written character, children will sometimes almost intuitively make circles—squares—triangles—parallelograms—or other mathematical figures. You must control these first attempts with the pencil, not allowing them to make lines at random, but training them in exercises, whether intellectual or mechanical, to habits of regularity and pains-taking. Should your children possess a taste or talent for drawing, it is very likely to be here observable. Sir Joshua Reynolds, West, and

most of the distinguished artists, gave early indications of that genius which raised them to fame and eminence.

You ask my opinion about the use of poetry in the instruction of children. I think it may be very legitimately employed, when the subjects are of a pleasurable or imaginative kind, and can be addressed to the affections and feelings. Children are fond of rhyme. They commit verse more readily to memory than prose. Dr. Watts' inimitable songs, as well as many little hymns and pieces adapted to the juvenile capacity, by other celebrated authors, will always be popular; partly because they breathe throughout, a spirit of genuine piety, and partly because the language, though simple, is pure and elegant. Poetry of the right stamp, has always a refining and elevating influence on the minds of both young and old.

In the process of education, however, I should recommend poetry to be employed very sparingly. In infant schools, where the children sing their lessons, it is necessary to call in the aid of rhyme more frequently. But I think, in your case, you will find the good old fashioned prose definitions and rules preferable. Instead of

“ An isle or island is

The name by us applied

To land, which seas or oceans deep

Surround on every side,”

better say, “ An island is a piece of land surrounded by water.”

As regards history, geography, geometry, grammar, and other sciences being introduced to the children's attention in the form of doggerel rhyme, I consider it injudicious. I have always been of opinion that the ideas are more likely to be

thoroughly investigated, and accurately comprehended, when presented to the understanding in the plain, befitting garb of prose. When poetry is employed in the transmission of knowledge to the mind, I am always afraid—LEST THE SOUND BE SUBSTITUTED FOR THE SENSE.

Whenever you find it possible, make even your scientific lessons the result of existing or accidental circumstances, or of the answers to questions started by the children themselves. For instance, in teaching the elementary rules of arithmetic, your son's own pocket money, marbles, and other toys, will supply him with a motive and a stimulus. His eagerness to acquire the art of adding—subtracting—multiplying and dividing—will very much facilitate the task of instructing him in this useful science.

Children pay more attention to conversations conducted in their presence, than they generally seem to do. I have sometimes observed them playing about, apparently heedless of every thing that was said by their parents or others who may have been engaged in colloquial intercourse; and perhaps a few days after, one of these sly listeners has made some pertinent remarks upon the topic he heard discussed, and proved to me that he had thereby acquired a considerable amount of information. Upon one occasion, an interesting boy, about five years of age, was present when several young ladies were conversing about the earth, the artificial globes, and other subjects of geography. The following morning, he was observed sitting by the terrestrial globe, folding his pocket handkerchief. His teacher inquired what he was doing. He said, that having heard a young lady say, last night, that the earth was about 24,000 miles round, he was

trying what space a thousand miles would be on his handkerchief. It just went round the little globe, so that by folding it into 24 parts he found out what he wanted.

The observant mother or teacher will discover incidents of this nature almost daily ; and they are invaluable, as regards mental training. The child referred to, was in the best possible condition for receiving a lesson on geography. He would attend with great eagerness to any information about the earth—its size, circumference, diameter, shape, motions, &c.,—that would be suitably communicated to him : and be assured, a lesson given at such a moment, would make a more lasting impression on his mind than a similar one at a time less opportune.

By directing his attention to the flowers, and plants, and trees—distinguishing them by familiar names, and characteristic properties and beauties—you will lay a good foundation for the future study of botany.

Your boy will, doubtless, very often question you about the sun, moon, and stars. Like other children, he may at first imagine that these shining orbs are little lamps, placed in the heavens to shed their light upon the world we live in. You will, of course, endeavour to convince him that the very smallest of these luminaries that “spangle the sky, and sparkle in their lofty spheres,” are large bodies—many of them worlds like our own, and probably peopled with intelligent beings. But take great care of oppressing his mind with too scientific a description of the planetary movements. Your child has much to learn. What you do now, is only preparatory. Try to give him correct, rather than philosophic ideas of a subject so sublime and vast,

so that when he enters upon the study of astronomy mathematically, there may be no erroneous views to eradicate.

In your walks through the garden, or in the woods or fields, you will have delightful opportunities of expatiating on the beauties and wonders of creation. Your children will heartily join with you in admiration of the lovely objects that are constantly passing like a panorama before their delighted eyes. Without at first referring to religion, or to the scriptures, you may converse with them on the greatness, the goodness, and the wisdom of that Almighty Being who gave us life—placed us in such a beautiful world—and who is perpetually conferring upon us pleasure and happiness of infinite variety. By such conversation, feelings of intense gratitude and astonishment will be excited in the children's minds. They will naturally make many inquiries on the subject. Answer them all as explicitly as possible.

Many mothers have to encounter a little juvenile scepticism in the matter of religion. It may be your case. At all events you must treat your children rationally in bringing this momentous subject before their minds.

Suppose you are out of doors, and pointing to some neighbouring edifice. You say that beautiful house before us did not grow up in the park or wood in that way. It was once erected by men of strength and skill. This watch that tells me the hour of the day was made by some clever, ingenious man. The builders of the house and the maker of the watch may be in America or Africa, or they may be dead. Yet I am as sure that the work was done by them as if I had been present during its performance. Now the heavenly

bodies, sun, moon, and stars, perform their revolutions so regularly—the seasons—spring, summer, autumn, winter, as well as day and night, return so punctually—the genial heat and refreshing rains are imparted so opportunely for promoting vegetation—every living thing seems so well adapted to its peculiar situation—and all these arrangements are so much beyond the capabilities of man—that there must be—all nature cries aloud that there must be—some great Being who made all these immense worlds, and who presides over his wonderful works.

When we inform children that God is a Spirit, it is necessary to accompany the remark with some simple illustration. For instance—last autumn we went to Brighton. We were greatly delighted with all we witnessed in that fashionable watering place. Although it is eight or nine months since, we can see the pier—the Chinese palace—the fine rolling waves—the pleasure boats—and the other attractive objects with which the place abounds. It is not our body that sees. It has not changed places. We could see those things as well if our bodily eyes were shut. It is the mind. Again—we saw many persons there that we loved. We love our relations and friends at home. We hate lying and disobedience and cruelty. It is not the body that loves or hates.—It is the *heart*. If the body was emaciated and sick, the heart would still love the same. Now the mind that thinks and reasons, and the heart that loves and fears and hates, constitute the spirit, or soul. Every man and woman have spirits, which will live for ever.

God is the Great Spirit. He is the Father of Spirits. To him all other beings owe their existence.

In explaining to your children the goodness, greatness, wisdom, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, unchangeableness, and other attributes of the Deity, many interesting illustrations will occur to you, calculated to deepen your children's veneration and love. They will soon perceive how reasonable it is that such an Almighty Being should be honored, worshipped, and obeyed—that our Creator and Preserver, who, though unseen, is always doing us good, deserves our heart-felt gratitude. Their young minds may be thus gradually prepared to receive many of the great truths of revelation. By such careful training, your children will approach the scriptures with feelings of reverential awe. They will consider the perusal of that sacred book, containing as it does the precepts, doctrines, and commands of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, as a privilege of inestimable worth. The story of our Saviour's birth, life, death, and resurrection, will excite their wonder and their love—while his miracles, counsels, and example, as recorded in the Evangelists, will prove a never-failing source of edification and instruction to them.

Fletcher's pictorial bible, and other little works on the subject of religion, couched in simple, elegant phraseology, will aid you much in this important part of your children's training.

In conversing with them on eternity, heaven, and other topics of sublime interest, let your explanations be as simple and rational as possible. Take care of making erroneous impressions on their minds, or of giving them confused ideas of these great subjects. So that they may not be under the necessity of re-modelling their faith when they become older. I have been rather tedious on this

point, my dear Amelia, because I know that parents, generally speaking, are not sufficiently simple in the religious instruction of their children. And because I am deeply solicitous that, under the blessing of Providence, you may be successful in exhibiting religion to your little ones, in its most attractive garb, and in irresistibly convincing them that its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

MY DEAR AMELIA,

I beg, without any preliminaries, to resume the important subject of juvenile training in which we are mutually interested. And in the first place, I would strongly advise you to accustom your children early to commit their ideas to paper. Let them, for instance, two or three times in the week, describe, in their own style, where they have been, what they have been doing, what they have seen, and what they have heard. They will sometimes give you very graphic descriptions of places and occurrences; for at seven or eight years of age, children have often great fluency of speech, and, if habituated to write, are very eloquent on paper. That little girls and boys can employ so many words, with their various modifications, so readily and so sensibly, in the expression of their thoughts, has always been to me matter of surprise. At first, regard their essays with encouraging complacency. When they have practised a few weeks, you may venture to point out the inaccuracies in their compositions. It is possible their errors may be very few and trivial. In correcting their mistakes, either in spelling or phraseology, you may, if necessary, interline improved and richer modes of expression. They will thus be trained to write, as well as speak

correctly, without knowing much of the technicalities of grammar. But this is not all. Their future progress in learning will be much hastened by their ability to take notes on paper. If they will keep a little diary, in which they may record any remarkable events, relating to themselves or friends—or define their progress in any branch of study, it will give them a facility of writing, and be a source of much gratification to them afterwards.

I cordially approve your intention of trying to initiate your son, as early as possible, into the Latin language. When he is versed in the construction of English sentences, and has acquired a copious vocabulary of words, you may almost playfully give him the Latin names of a few nouns, adjectives and verbs—and shew him the nature of the terminations relative to genders, cases, moods, tenses, &c.—the agreement and government of the various parts of speech—and the manner in which the construction of Latin sentences differs from English syntax. Without the aid of any grammar, except for yourself, or without burdening his memory with rules, you may soon enable him to hold a short conversation with you in the Latin tongue—and thus gradually prepare him for one of the most prominent studies in the public schools.

I should not attempt to influence your decision with respect to your daughter. Many parents think that if their girls get a smattering of French and Italian, it is quite sufficient. My own individual opinion is, that all children, both male and female, in the more refined ranks of life, ought to be, at least partially instructed in the Latin language. Ancient books, by translation, lose much of their force and beauty of style. We cannot, without a knowledge of Latin, thoroughly

understand any modern language, so many of the words being derived from Latin roots. And I may add, that this is a language with which all learned men are supposed to be familiar. If any important discovery in science has to be made known to the learned of all nations, it must be through the medium of Latin. Whether you may deem a portion of your daughter's time misapplied or not in obtaining a knowledge of this ancient language, I am glad you so perfectly concur with me in reference to your son.

It is now time that I should answer your judicious question respecting the propriety of sending your children to appropriate schools. Of my own views on home education, you are already in possession. No one can be more sensibly alive to its advantages. While under the fostering guardianship of the parents, the culture of the children's minds and hearts can be almost uninterruptedly continued. Home is the place to lay the foundation of every moral quality in the child's character that will render him amiable, useful, and distinguished in after life. But I have always thought that boys of nine or ten years of age derive immense benefits from attending a well-conducted public school. They thereby get better acquainted with the rules of society. The school is a little world of itself, in which the habits, customs, and manners of the great community are portrayed in miniature. And they are thus gradually prepared to fill their assigned position in society.

If a boy possesses genius, it is certain to be called forth in a public school. Latent powers of intellect, which may have long slumbered in dormancy at home, are called into life and activity by the inevitable collision with other minds.

At school, a boy reaps instruction from the lessons given to others. Whereas, at home, he only learns the specific lessons he is taught. And this is a greater advantage than one would at first sight suppose. Many a fine boy, by merely listening to the lessons of his school-mates, has become enamoured of sciences which he had no intention of ever learning himself, and often in some of those peculiar departments, has obtained great celebrity. The opportunity of becoming, even superficially acquainted with a variety of studies, is of great value.

And a public school presents a fine field for the cultivation of every noble faculty, both of body and mind. The physical exercises are so exciting that they induce a voluntary competition in the sports and pastimes, and gymnastic performances, which cannot fail to promote health, and increase muscular energy and strength. The mental powers also undergo such strict military discipline, that boys soon or ultimately get rid of all that sickly sentimentalism which often characterizes children who have been tenderly brought up. They acquire a larger share of manly virtue, and are better prepared, both intellectually and physically, for whatever portion of the world's rough usage may fall to their lot in life.

You must prepare your son for the event of leaving home by frequent conversations with him on the subject. A boy of nine years old, trained as I hope yours will have been, may be easily convinced that his future prospects in life must materially depend on his conduct and assiduity at school. Inform him that he will have to mix with a great number of boys nearly of his own age, but of various tempers and dispositions. Some

good, kind, obliging, generous, cheerful, polite, or amiable—others mean, rude, cruel, uncivil, obstinate, quarrelsome, or naughty. Shew him how necessary, therefore, it will be for him to govern his own temper—to be kind and courteous to all his school-mates—and respectful and obedient to his masters.

It is wrong to deceive boys by inducing them to imagine that they will have no hard studies to pursue after they leave home. "There is no royal road to learning." Whoever wishes to excel, must be content to pursue the same slow and difficult, but certain path, which thousands have successfully trodden before them. A boy of noble spirit, will always feel a greater interest in surmounting a literary obstacle, when he is conscious that it puzzled others in their turn.

You, my dear Amelia, have by slow and imperceptible degrees, trained your son to think and to study for himself. Unlike too many instructors, who take their stand upon the lofty eminence of their own attainments, and haughtily beckon their pupils to follow them, you have descended to the bottom, taken him affectionately by the hand, and led him gently, as far as you have been permitted to accompany him, up the steep and rugged hill of literature. Be assured, the remembrance of those timely aids will operate as a powerful stimulus and encouragement to him, while making further ascents under the guidance of other directors. To a mother's kiss of approval, an eminent painter attributes all his subsequent success and celebrity in his profession.

Without expressing any opinion respecting the propriety of that competition for prizes which prevails at most public schools, I hope you

will convince your son before he leaves you, that the possession of knowledge is of itself ample compensation for whatever amount of pains may have been expended in its acquisition. Intellectual diligence, invariably brings along with it, its own rich reward—compared with which, medals and prizes are insignificant and valueless. In public schools, where emulation is one of the principal incentives to exertion, many fine boys have labored most indefatigably to acquit themselves honorably at the half-yearly examinations, and when they have failed in arriving at that meritorious distinction to which they aspired, the circumstance has operated as “a heavy blow and sore discouragement to them.” It is therefore wise to prepare your son in the outset for such disappointments. And to prove to him that, however unwearingly he may pursue his studies for the purpose of excelling on those exciting occasions alluded to, he will have the gratifying consciousness, let him succeed or not, that while training his mind, and storing it with useful knowledge, he has not laboured in vain.

Allow me to say one word in reference to your daughter. There is only one portion of her education that I have the slightest apprehension of being overlooked. It is that part which relates more especially to domestic comfort. Habituate her to do as much as possible for herself. For instance, to keep all her articles of dress in good order—to mend her own stockings—to sew and knit—and as you have allowed her the use of money, to purchase what she requires for her own toilet—and to keep a regular account of her expenditure.

As soon as she is able to perform such offices, you may judiciously permit her to make her own bed, and to keep her own chamber in proper

order, I frequently take her into the kitchen with you, and make her practically acquainted with cooking in all its varieties. Allow her, as a privilege, to be present when you are giving orders for dinner. Let her, at times, arrange the dinner table herself. Instruct her in the art of carving, so that if necessary, she may be able to perform this duty with ease. Give her private lessons on the mode of doing the honors of the table with grace and dignity—and in order that she may have opportunity of carrying your instructions into practice, allow her sometimes to preside at a family dinner, and as often as possible at tea. In short, make her familiarly and practically acquainted with all the mysteries of house-keeping.

If she never require in after life to perform any of the severer domestic duties into which you have so early initiated her, she will, at any rate, know better when household affairs are properly transacted.—She will be more competent to sympathize with servants when their work is oppressive—and to reprove and commend them according to their merits. But if adverse circumstances should ever compel her to do the drudgery connected with these offices, then she will discover with grateful appreciation, the value of your judicious care. I scarcely know a more pitiable case than that of a lady adorned with all the embellishments which a liberal ornamental education can bestow, but ignorant of the plain domestic everyday duties of life, thrown by some sudden reverse of fortune upon her own unassisted resources.

As you have decided on sending your daughter from home for a few years, I need scarcely suggest to you the propriety of avoiding what are termed cheap boarding schools. You cannot expect

your children to be maintained comfortably and respectably at school for a less amount than it costs you at home. And I am sure you would not wish to accept the services of a faithful and efficient instructor of your child, without awarding to her an ample and honorable remuneration.

I advise you to be very careful in the selection of an establishment. Find out, if possible, one conducted on some such principles as you adopt at home—one whose manager understands the best modes of moral and intellectual culture—who does not compel her young ladies to devote too much precious time to fancy needle-work, and other elaborate performances purely mechanical, while the training of the mind is proportionately neglected—who carefully considers the position in society her pupils are likely to occupy in after life, and prepares them for it accordingly—and who exemplifies in her own visible character, those religious precepts and lessons which she imparts to her pupils. The literary attainments of many young ladies, educated at popular boarding schools, are, I regret to say, of a very superficial character. You cannot, therefore, be too particular in endeavouring to place your daughter under the guardianship of one, who not only possesses a thorough knowledge of every department of learning she professes to teach, and a ready facility of communicating information to others, but who, from her habitual attention to the youthful intellect, is also capable of adapting her instructions to the varied mental circumstances of her pupils. For you may depend upon it, children can never make satisfactory progress in any branch of learning, unless, as I have intimated on other occasions, they are thoroughly grounded in its principles. I sincerely hope that you will soon find an

establishment to which you can safely and confidently send your daughter for the completion of her education.

I must, however, bring my communication to a close. The remarks have been penned down in a very desultory form. I hope you may glean from them some suggestions that may aid you in the interesting work of juvenile training in which you are engaged. It is not improbable, that in a few months, you shall have another epistle from me, on the most pleasant and profitable way for children to spend their holidays at home—and on some of the healthiest exercises, both mentally and physically, that on such joyous occasions may be appropriately introduced.

I need not reiterate my sincere and cordial wishes for your own—your husband's, and your children's happiness and prosperity in this world, and for your unending enjoyment in another and a better one.

Believe me,

Your sincere friend, &c., &c.

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